

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

SEPTEMBER 1985

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting	September 6	Orchids - Miss Frances Poole
Meeting	October 4	Seals and Sea Lions - Mr Ross Warnecki
Excursion	September 8	Linton Block - Working Bee (see notes on page 2)
Excursion	September 13-15	Melville Caves- Camp out (see details on page 2)
	October 6	Enfield Forest - Mrs Pat Murphy



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE EIGHT ORCHIDS ?

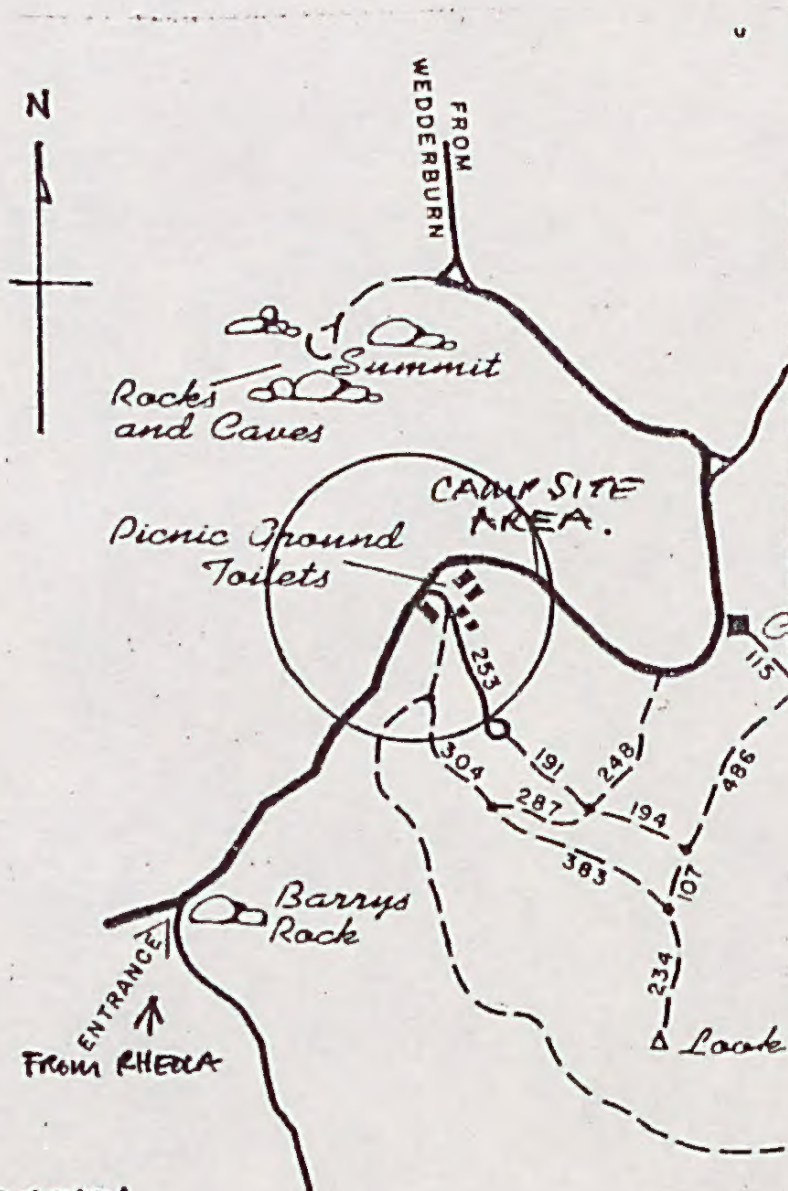
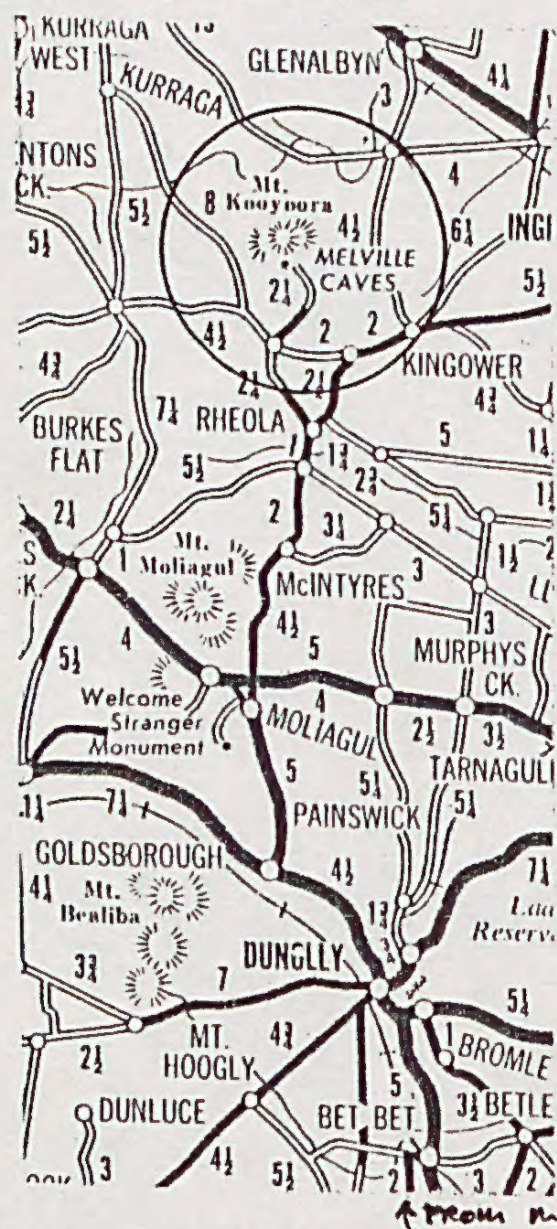
ANSWERS - P. 8.

President: Miss H Burgess 312210
 Secretary: Miss J Binns 323670
 Treasurer: Mrs F Williamson 327631
 Editors: Mr G Binns 323670
 Mr L Fink 052 861319

Meetings, as specified, are held in the Art Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 7.30pm.
 EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS, OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

MELVILLE CAVES RESERVE CAMP-OUT.

The Club Spring camp-out, scheduled for the weekend of September 13 - 15, will be based at the Melville Caves Scenic Reserve, north of Dunolly. The over-night camp will be made close to the Picnic Ground facilities (all campers must be self-sufficient) and members may wish to camp Friday and/or Saturday nights or to join the group for the daily excursions into the surrounding bushlands. Excursion departure time from the Picnic Ground will be 10.30 AM, Saturday and Sunday. Access details are shown on the maps below.



WORKING BEE - LINTON BLOCK. September 8.

The flora and fauna reserve is at the 92 mile post on the Skipton Rd, just past Linton, on the left side of the highway. Bring hoes, mattocks, spades, gloves to deal with those noxious weeds. And of course sustenance!

AUGUST EXCURSION.

The excursion was to the Mt. Erip area on a cold blustery day. First portion of the day was through Smythesdale, Scarsdale to The Crossing, various historical and geological features being observed enroute.

We moved up onto Mt. Erip to a point near a new horse stud then, leaving the cars, descended a long gully to the Woady Yallock River. Here we were well sheltered from the blustery winds by the Messmate and Peppermint coverage. Botanically the season has not really begun, apart from the Ironbark trees well in bloom and busily patronised by Honey-eaters.

Back to the crossing again for lunch and to await any newcomers. Exploration of this area revealed a fine survivor of the last dry period, a *Correa reflexa* cross *C. glabra* which caused some discussion as to its rightful genera.

Further areas were examined, leading to the disturbance of a Black Faced Wallaby by one of the younger members. Time having flown and the day becoming colder, a halt was finally called to a very enjoyable day at an interesting spot.

The Crossing was one of J.R.W's. favorite areas as he had observed Sugar Gliders, Wedgetail Eagles and Frogmouths there in the past.

P. Fry.

NATIVE FLORA AND FAUNA GUARANTEE.

Proposals for new legislation on this most significant planning strategy for the protection of our flora and fauna are being developed for discussion within the Dept. of Conservation, Forests and Lands. If the suggested proposals are passed, the legislation could substantially assist in the saving of endangered species and in solving current nature conservation problems. The C.C.V. are conducting meetings to plan support for the Guarantee. A community meeting will be held at the Environmental Centre, 285 Lt. Lonsdale St, Melbourne at 6.00 pm, Wed. September 25.

R.S.V.P. Ph. 03 6631561.

The Film Viewed at the August Meeting.

"A CURIOUS AND DIVERSE FLORA".

Among the first whitemen to land on the Eastern coast of Australia were two botanists, Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander.

Banksias commemorate Banks, while the family SOLANACEAE were named after Solander.

They found a flora unlike any they had seen and were able to identify some families but the rest were completely different. A Banksia (*B serrata*) was the first plant seen and this was given the name of the botanist. The area was named Botany Bay. Among other plants found were Woody Pear, Grevilleas (200 species in Australia), Wax Plants (from the Citrus family), Boronias, Flannel Flowers (related to Celery and Carrots) and many others.

Altogether there are 2000 or so species in this area.

Further around on the Coastal Heathlands were EPACRIDACEAE of several species and Grasses, together with Grass-trees (related to Lilies) in a multitudinous profusion of plants and flowers.

Cassuarinas (sheoak) which look like conifers, have cones and are unique to Australasia, while other trees, the Eucalypts, are called gums because of the gum or kino they exude. Eucalypts belong to the Myrtle family, as do the Bottlebrushes, Paperbarks and Teatrees.

Legumes are plentiful with their mainly yellow flowers, Acacias come into this family of important plants because they have nodules on their roots which release Nitrogen into an otherwise starved soil. These plants, and others, make up the under-story usually dominated by two large Eucalypts with either rough or smooth bark.

The struggle for nutrients is intense, with a large percentage of plants having an association with Fungi. Some, like the Proteas, have a large root system to trap Phosphates of which our soils are deficient. Some areas, mainly coastal, have a deficiency of copper and other trace elements. Further down the gullies and onto the plains there are more nutrients.

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In the Rainforest areas, with their dense shade and an understory of plants with soft leaves and ferns, the soil is much better with a heavy mulch of rotting leaves and twigs. One of these trees, Sassafras, is worthy of mention because it is a primitive plant.

Fire becomes increasingly important to our flora and also to some of our fauna. There has always been fire from lightning strikes in summer, burning many Hectares, and, after the first people came more fire was used; possibly some plants died out then .

Eucalypts have the ability to regenerate through epicormic buds under the bark and lignotubers under the ground. Some seeds need fire to crack their hard outer case, others to open their woody fruits, while still others need the ashes in which to germinate. There would be a lack of predators and a maximum of nutrients at this time.

Three thousand miles away in the far South West of this country is the largest collection of flowering plants and shrubs. The first Eucalypt seen here was *E. cornuta* (Pres. Helen had a flower, caps and seed pod). The word Eucalyptus refers to the flower caps and means well covered.

The country around King George Sound and the Barrens is particularly rich in plants. Robert Brown was one of the early botanists in this area with Bauer, who was a painter.

Further inland is the Stirling Ranges, the largest in W.A., where there grows in profusion a mass of plants, unique and as diverse as any. Banksias are at home here, and many other members of the Protea family, making Australia the home of the largest group of these plants. Proteas are also found in Africa. 75% of plants in the South West are endemic and cover a wide range of families. Some of the more interesting are the Albany Pitcher Plant, Darwinias, Verticordias, Black Gins (a relation of the Blackboy of E. and S.W. areas), Leschenaultias, Kangaroo Paws and the Swamp Daisy- which isn't a Daisy!

This S.W. area is virtually cut off from the Eastern areas and has evolved along its own lines.

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Most of Australia's lovely and interesting plants are found on the poorer soils and heathlands.

One of the characteristics of our plants is that they have leathery leaves, needles or phyllodes, the purpose being to conserve moisture in the plant by showing as little as possible of the surface area to the Sun. Eucalypts turn their leaves sideways for a similar purpose.

In tropical areas one would think that we have a close affiliation with S.E. Asia in the Mangroves, Mudflats and Palms.

On Mt. Bartle Frere there are giant ferns and also Australia's only Rododendron. There is also a tree with toxic stinging hairs, and on the specimen collected by Banks the hairs still retain their toxicity. Tall trees are found with Epiphytes and Ferns, Mosses and Lichens, Lianas and Lawyer Vines hanging down to the great buttressed roots that are sent out for nourishment in these overcrowded forests.

Many of our plants and trees have a southern origin, huge forests of Araucaria were growing around Lake Berine long ago and today, there is still one to be found there, *A. bidwillii*, with one on Norfolk Island and one in South America. Cycads are ancient plants that still grow in Australia, they have a nut like fruit that is poisonous. The Aborigines learned long ago how to overcome this poison and use them for food.

Inland there are dry forests with grass and virtually deciduous Eucalypts. Rain Forests contain relics of a wetter climate; the Cooktown Orchid is one of these relics.

Inland the rainfall decreases by up to 75% making Australia the driest Continent. In Central Australia there are Palms in long forgotten corners, similar to others more than 1000 miles away on the East Coast.

Not only is the rain fall low in these areas, it is erratic. Nardoo, a fern, comes to life in puddles after rain and a Eucalypt, beloved in folk lore, the Coolabah (*E. microtheca*) are two well known plants.

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There are other large Gums but these are confined to the watercourses. One is the River Red Gum, the most widespread of our Eucalypts. Mulga, an Acacia, is prevalent with phyllodes well adapted to the inland. Large bushes of Atriplex, called Old Man Saltbush, grow on the saline soils with other Succulants. True Succulants are very rare in Australia and cactus is not a native and is not represented.

The desert blooms after rain with quick growing short lived plants that flower and seed sometimes within a week. Desert Oaks grow quite large on the sandhills. Hummock Grasses cover about 30% of the Continent, Spinifex and Porcupine Grasses being the major species.

Ranunculus and anenomes live in icy water, some plants grow behind the shelter of rocks in Highland areas, while the sheltered slopes support Alpine Haths, Kunzeas and our only Richea on the mainland.

The Daisy family is abundant with Mountain Gentian (Gentians are found all over the World).

This was a very comprehensive film and we are grateful to Dr Frank Harrap arranging the screening.

L.F.

The following notes on PROTEACEAE, referred to in the prece ding report, have been prepared by Harvey Hooper.

1200 species :- about 700 in Australia, 475 in South Africa, 25 in the temperate part of South America.

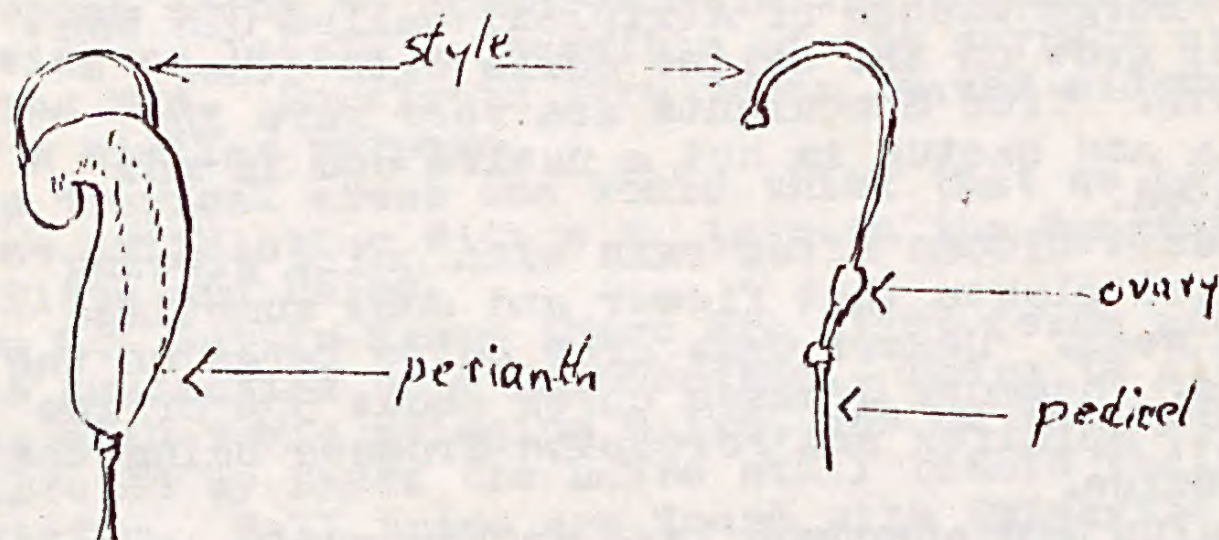
To the botanists of the seventeenth century the great variety in the form of the clusters of flowers suggested a family name taken from the Greek sea god, Proteus, who could change his shape in many ways.

Some spectacular examples of the family are the Prteas, native to South Africa, but available here as garden plants.

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Flowers are bisexual, have a simple perianth (petaloid) of 4 segments (more or less united), 4 stamens, one carpel (superior).

Shrubs or trees.



VICTORIAN FIELD NATURALISTS CLUBS ASSOCIATION - SPRINGTIME GET-TOGETHER.

Maryborough - October 5 - 6, 1985.

Saturday: dep. Post Office for excursions 1.20 pm;
Tea, Meeting and Campfire, M.F.N. Clubhouse
6 pm.

Sunday: dep. Post Office for excursions 9.00 am;
Lunch at Clubhouse.

Further details from Eileen Courtney (054 612249).

REPORT:

B. Andrews: White Goshawk observed at Garibaldi,
south of Buninyong.

EIGHT ORCHIDS - ANSWERS TO PICTURE QUIZ, PAGE 1

1. Peaked Beard Orchid; 2. Elbow Orchid; 3. Large Duck Orchid; 4. Nodding Greenhood; 5. Gnat Orchid; 6. Mosquito Orchid; 7. Blue Caladenia; 8. Hare Orchid. The illustrations have been adapted from H.P. Dickins - Victorian Orchids, published in 1929.